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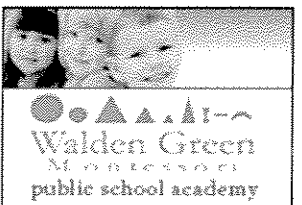
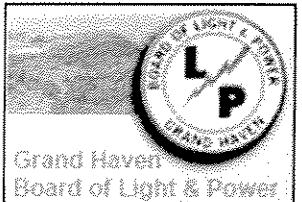


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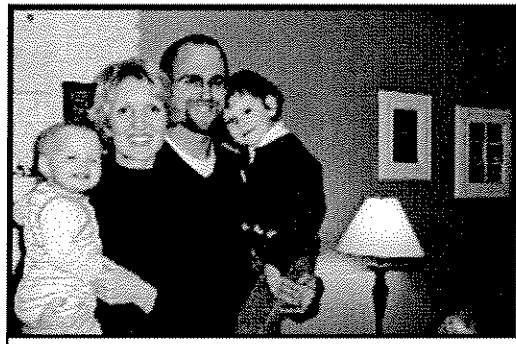


## GH family to participate in Adoption Day celebration

BY CHARLES COOK  
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This holiday season some area families will have something new to be thankful for.

Tuesday, a Grand Haven couple will be one of eight county families finalizing adoptions and adding new members to their homes at the Ottawa County Family Court.



[Click here for larger view](#)

The court will be hosting Ottawa County's Adoption Day Celebration beginning at 9:20 a.m. in West Olive. Michigan Adoption Day is sponsored by the Michigan Department of Human Services and the Michigan Supreme Court.

There are several adoption options available to people. One of the most popular kinds of adoption is domestic infant adoption. While very traditional in origin, this type of adoption has been changing in the last 40 years.

Grand Haven residents Kari and Chad Bonnama have had two open adoptions in the last few years. In open adoptions birth parents choose who will adopt their child and, depending on the openness of the adoption, may arrange visits with the family or share pictures and stories about the child's growth.

The second adoption of daughter Madison was so open that the Bonnamas got to witness Madison's birth. Madison's birth mother is a high school student from Cadillac.

"My husband got to cut the cord," Kari Bonnama said. "It's just

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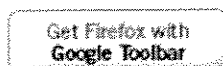
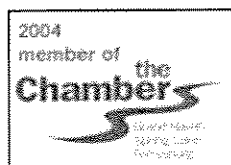
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been a very wonderful experience."

Madison's birth mother interviewed the Bonnamas shortly after Barbara Walters' televised a "Be My Baby" report in April 2004. In that story, the Bonnamas were not the only potential parents being interviewed. Madison's birth mother was considering two couples before interviewing the Bonnamas.

Bonnama said the two families really hit it off, and although there were some mixed feelings, the birth of Madison was like a party with the birth parents and friends and family and the Bonnamas in attendance. Last year, the birth mother even came to spend the night at the Bonnamas' home, and the two families still converse.

Kari Bonnama also said that she wishes her first daughter's adoption was that open. McKenna, 5, has only met her birth mother once since the adoption.

Over the last several years, open adoptions have become increasingly popular. In closed infant adoptions, more popular in the '40s and '50s, birth parents are kept in the dark about the whereabouts of the child.

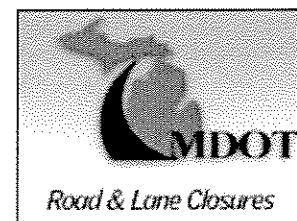
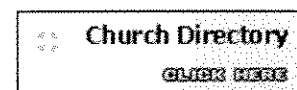
Another kind of adoption that has become increasingly popular since the '70s is international infant adoption, in which parents will adopt children from Asia, Russia or South America. Although this type of adoption is more expensive, it is very prevalent because especially in China or Russia there are a huge number of children without a home, and families often wait years to adopt American infants. The cost of international adoptions range from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

Special needs adoptions are available both for international and national adoptive parents. Older children who have been orphaned by court removal from their family or natural causes are classified as special needs in the U.S. While some of these children may have been abused or neglected, not all special needs adoptees suffer from severe emotional and psychological trauma.

Diane Prisby, adoption specialist with the Ottawa County Department of Family Services, said although some of the adoptees may have more or less severe trauma, a child separated from a family suffers some degree of trauma from the separation.

International special needs adoptees, on the other hand, frequently have physical disabilities that the child's home country can't afford to treat. Regardless of the nationality of the adoptee, special needs children are often the least expensive types of adoptions. International special needs adoptions are often subsidized at least partially by private parties, and national special needs adoptions are free.

Another option for potential parents that is less common is



frozen "embryo adoptions." These "adoptions" involve implanting leftover embryos from in-vitro fertilization attempts of the last 20 years. Since every embryo doesn't take, these procedures have been producing an embryo surplus for years. Nonprofit companies such as California's Nightlife Children Adoptions, funded by the Bush Administration and congress, offer these embryos for "adoption."

Nightlife's Web site says the cost of embryo "adoption" and implantation is between \$6,800 and \$7,500, which is significantly cheaper than the cost of producing the embryos.

This year, the Bonnama family also went through an embryo adoption. Although the embryos didn't take, Bonnama said the family may try again in the future.

"It was pretty emotional," Bonnama said. "Who knows; maybe down the road. Four hundred thousand embryos are frozen right now just waiting to be adopted."

The Michigan Supreme Court has named Nov. 22 as Michigan's Adoption Day this year. Adoption Day has been celebrated in the state on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving for the last three years. Across the state, local courts and human service offices from 30 counties will celebrate Adoption Day by finalizing adoptions and hosting parties for adoptive families. Gov. Jennifer Granholm has proclaimed November as Adoption Month.

According to the Michigan Supreme Court Adoption Work Group, in July of 2003 there were 12,673 children in temporary wards and 19,490 children in foster care. Betty Claar, Ottawa County Family Court programs supervisor, said any type of adoption can be finalized on Adoption Day.

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